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Accessory Building/ Accessory Uses

What is an accessory use and what rules apply to these? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) allows various accessory buildings or land uses in each zoning district. The ordinance defines “accessory” as: “A building or a use of land used for a purpose incident and subordinate to that for which a main building is used, and the use of premises for a purpose incident and subordinate to the main or dominant use of the premises.” For a building or use to be accessory, it must be lesser than the primary permitted use on the property. For example, if a detached garage building is allowed as an accessory use in a residential district, it must be smaller than the primary residential use (house).

Administrative Variances

Variances to building setbacks may be processed administratively or through the public hearing process at the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#), at the applicant's option. Administrative variances require an application form (contact the [Planning Department](#)) and an [application fee](#). Variances require strict legal findings, based on proof supplied by the applicant. These findings include:

- (1) That the strict application of the ordinance requirement would produce undue hardship;
- (2) That such hardship is not shared generally by other properties in the same zoning district and the same vicinity; and
- (3) That the authorization of such administrative variance will not be of substantial detriment to adjacent property and that the character of the zoning district will not be changed by the granting of the administrative variance.

In most situations, new construction cannot meet these criteria. Typically, hardship findings cannot be made if there is a feasible design solution available that meets code requirements. We encourage you to review all possible design solutions that would not require a variance process.

Animals

What types of animals are allowed at my house? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) regulates permitted land uses in zoning districts. In residential districts, household pets such as dogs, cats, parakeets, tropical fish, etc. are permitted “accessory uses.” Keeping more than two dogs that are more than four months old for non-commercial use is defined as “private kennel.” Private kennels are permitted in the agricultural (A) district and prohibited in residential districts. A special exception is required for private kennels in residential districts. Dog licenses are available through [Animal Control](#).

What types of animals are not allowed? In residential districts, and in the agricultural district on properties smaller than three acres, keeping the following animals requires approval of a conditional use permit:

- Chickens
- Cows
- Farm Animals
- Fowl (other than chickens)

- Goats (including pygmy goats)
- Horses (including ponies and miniature horses)
- Pigs (including pot-bellied pigs)
- Rabbits
- Sheep
- Small Domesticated Livestock

The above listed animals are permitted in agricultural districts for property that is at least three acres in size.

I want to keep an “exotic” animal. What are the rules? Approval of a conditional use permit would be required in agricultural or residential districts to keep animals that have the same general character as farm animals or small domesticated livestock. Keeping animals that do not fit the above-listed categories requires approval of a conditional use planned development.

Appeals

How can I appeal a recent planning or zoning decision? The [Code of Chesterfield County](#) provides the right of appeal to certain persons for a variety of different zoning and subdivision decisions. The appeal process depends on the type of action you wish to appeal. There may also be an [application fee](#) for certain types of appeal applications. The right to appeal in some cases is restricted. Please contact the [Planning Department](#) to discuss your particular situation.

Application Forms

Where can I get application forms for zoning or development projects? Most application forms are available at the [Planning Department](#) front counter. Application forms for rezoning, conditional use permits, conditional use planned developments, and substantial accord determinations are available upon completion of a mandatory pre-application meeting with zoning staff. Many forms are available [online](#) in Adobe PDF format. The county is researching options for online application submission. However, at this time, paper copies of applications must still be submitted.

Can I submit applications by mail or by courier? Application resubmittals and supplemental information can generally be sent by mail or courier. New applications should be submitted in person, directly by the application or agent, so that any incomplete items may be fully communicated. Applications that are not filed in person may require longer processing times in order to evaluate application completeness.

What happens if I submit an incomplete application? [Planning Department](#) staff will work with you to identify the missing or incomplete parts of the application. Certain items (including, but not limited to the application form, power of attorney form, and the application fee) must be included in the submittal or your application will be returned.

Assessments

How much is my property assessment? The [Real Estate Assessments Department](#) has a simple [web site](#) that you can use to find assessment information.

How will a proposed development affect my property values? The county does not provide real estate advice and cannot predict the potential impacts of any development proposal on nearby property values. You may wish to discuss this question with a real estate professional.

How are assessments increasing in my area? [Click here](#) for general information regarding assessments. The [Chesterfield County Communities Report](#) provides information on a variety of housing indicators, including assessment trends.

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Banners

What are the rules for putting up banners? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) (Section 19-638) allows temporary sign banners that advertise special events (sales, grand opening, community events) for a limited time period (30 consecutive days, maximum). Banners solely advertising a business name and/or logo are prohibited. A free [banner permit](#) is required for each banner.

Board of Supervisors

Who is my Board of Supervisors representative? The county is divided into five magisterial districts (Bermuda, Clover Hill, Dale, Matoaca, and Midlothian), each with its own elected representative to the [Board of Supervisors](#). The Real Estate Assessments Department [Web site](#) has a simple fill-in screen that you can use that will show your magisterial district. [Click here](#) for contact information for your Supervisor.

Where do I find information about Board of Supervisors meetings? [Click here](#) for information about meeting dates, agendas, and minutes. [Click here](#) for recent and upcoming zoning case agendas.

Board of Zoning Appeals

What is the Board of Zoning Appeals and what do they do? [Click here](#) for general information about the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) (BZA). The BZA reviews applications for variances and special exceptions, and certain types of appeals.

Who is my Board of Zoning Appeals representative? The county is divided into five magisterial districts (Bermuda, Clover Hill, Dale, Matoaca, and Midlothian), each with its own elected representative to the BZA. The [Circuit Court](#) appoints commissioners to represent each district. The Real Estate Assessments Department [Web site](#) has a simple fill-in screen that you can use that will show your magisterial district.

How can I contact my BZA representative? [Click here](#) for contact information.

Boats

Where can I store my boat? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines boats as “recreational equipment” and limits boat storage in residential districts. Recreational equipment may not be parked in front yards (except for loading or unloading), and must be parked or stored in a rear yard in an area set back at least ten feet from rear lot lines and five feet from side lot lines. No trailer shall have its wheels removed except for repair purposes

Buffers

What are buffers? A buffer is a natural screening area composed of natural vegetation, such as trees and underbrush. The intent of a buffer is to shield developments from adjoining roads, more intense land uses, noise, glare, and to maintain privacy.

What buffer requirements apply to my property? Buffer widths, locations, and requirements vary across the county. Contact the [Planning Department](#) to discuss your particular situation.

What can be done in buffer areas? Designated buffers cannot be disturbed. This includes removing trees and underbrush. Removal of dead or diseased trees in buffers must be approved by the [Planning Department](#). Accessory buildings such as garages and sheds may not encroach into a buffer.

Building Additions

I'd like to build an addition to my house. What is required? Before construction begins you should contact the [Planning Department](#) to verify building setbacks, and contact the [Building Inspections Department](#) regarding building permit requirements.

What about the requirements to expand my non-residential building? Very minor additions (less than 2,500 square feet of total land disturbance) generally require only a building permit. Non-residential additions that result in 2,500 to 10,000 square feet of land disturbance may be eligible for [minor site plan review](#). All other non-residential additions typically require [site plan review](#).

Building Permits

Do I need a building permit? A building permit is required for most new construction. Information about building permits is available from the [Building Inspections Department](#). Building permits are generally not required for fences (except for masonry walls) and small accessory structures (such as sheds less than 150 square feet, costing less than \$500 in materials and labor).

Buildable Residential Lots

I have a vacant lot. Can I build a house on it? Factors such as zoning, lot area, lot width, utility connections, and parcel creation date may all affect whether a lot or parcel is buildable for a residence. Contact the [Planning Department](#) to discuss your particular situation.

Building Setbacks

What are building setbacks and why are they required? Building setbacks are the minimum distance separation required between property lines and a building. Setbacks are required by the [Zoning Ordinance](#). The purpose of building setbacks is to provide adequate yard areas and separation between buildings for light, air and privacy between properties. The term “yards” is used in the ordinance to indicate required building “setbacks.”

What building setbacks apply to my property? Ordinarily, the required minimum yards listed in each residential zoning districts apply to properties within such districts.

Note: This information does not replace or supersede the Zoning Ordinance or conditions of zoning. Additional restrictions may be imposed by private covenants or conditions of property owner associations.

Setbacks for office, commercial, and industrial uses are outlined in the [Zoning Ordinance](#) through a variety of district and area regulations. Setback requirements for any property may also be modified by a condition of zoning, recorded subdivision plat, or by variances granted by the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#). Please contact the [Planning Department](#) to discuss your particular situation.

Business Licenses

Do I need a business license? Most businesses in Chesterfield County must be licensed by the county. [Click here](#) for business license information. New businesses must also comply with applicable zoning requirements. Please contact the [Planning Department](#) for zoning information. If your business will operated from your home, it will also be subject to zoning requirements for [home occupations](#).

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Carports

What are the requirements for building a carport on my property? Generally, a carport will require building permit approval through the [Building Inspections Department](#), prior to construction. If the carport is attached to the main structure on the property (such as a house) it would need to comply with building setback requirements for the main structure. If the carport is detached (stand-alone), it would need to comply with the building setback requirements for accessory structures.

Car Repair

I want to open a car repair business. What are the county requirements? The property where you wish to operate the business would need to be properly zoned. Generally, such businesses are not permitted in residential, agricultural, or office zoning districts. You will also need a [business license](#) to operate the business.

I want to repair my car at my house. What county standards apply? Car repair of your personal vehicles is permitted by zoning at your residence, subject to certain limitations. The car repair activity cannot be a business ([home occupation](#)), and inoperable vehicles must be shielded or screened from view from adjacent properties. Private covenants or homeowners association requirements may also prohibit or further restrict vehicle repair.

I have a car that doesn't run. Are there particular storage requirements for keeping this at my home? Only one inoperable vehicle may be stored outside of a fully enclosed building, provided it is shielded or screened from view.

Case (Site Plan, Subdivision, Zoning, etc.)

What does the term "case" mean, as used by the Planning Department? The term case is used to refer to individual applications for zoning or planning approvals. Applications for planning or zoning approval are assigned eight digit alphanumeric codes for tracking and project management purposes (for example: 06SN0123). The first two digits identify the fiscal year when the application was received. The next two letters identify the type of application. The final four digits are assigned in the order of application receipt. This case number is used throughout the planning process and is included in public hearing notices and meeting agendas.

Note: This information does not replace or supersede the Zoning Ordinance or conditions of zoning. Additional restrictions may be imposed by private covenants or conditions of property owner associations.

CC&Rs (covenants, conditions and restrictions)

What are covenants or CC&Rs? Zoning standards are "minimum" standards that apply to all property. Certain subdivisions also have private covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) and/or property owner associations. These additional conditions are not enforced by the county, since they are private legal arrangements between property owners. These conditions are enforced by property owner associations, or by private property owners in a subdivision, or both. Often, covenants are more restrictive than county ordinances. However, in the case where covenants are less restrictive, county standards still apply as the minimum requirement.

Some associations are mandatory, meaning that all residents must pay a membership fee. Others are voluntary, meaning that membership is optional. Associations are a primary means for enforcing property covenants. Covenants vary by subdivision, and are usually on record in the [Clerk of the Circuit Court](#). The [Planning Department](#) does not maintain records of private property covenants.

Census Data

Where can I find Census data for Chesterfield County? The [Census Bureau](#) conducts a decennial census (once every ten years) of population and housing, and produces a variety of other demographic reports. [Click here](#) to view summary information about 2000 Census data for Chesterfield County. More recent, limited census data may be available through the [American Communities Survey](#).

Census Tracts

What is my Census Tract number? [Click here](#) for map showing year 2000 census tracts. [Click here](#) for a map showing year 1990 census tracts.

Chickens

Are chickens allowed in my neighborhood? Chickens are permitted in the agricultural district on property that is at least three acres in size. In residential zoning districts, and in the agricultural district on properties smaller than three acres, keeping chickens is not permitted, and would require approval of a conditional use permit:

Childcare

What are the rules for running a childcare business out of a home? Childcare is a permitted use in residential and agricultural districts provided that the childcare operator takes care of no more than five children at one time (not including any children living on the premises). A conditional use permit is required for family day care homes that take care of more than five children that live elsewhere. For more information, [click here](#).

Churches / Places of Worship

Where are churches or places of worship allowed? Churches and other places of worship are permitted uses by right in most residential and commercial zoning districts. Contact the [Planning Department](#) to verify the zoning on a specific property, to see if a church or other place of worship would be permitted.

Can I have a church meeting in my home? Your home may be used for occasional group meetings (such as a weekly bible study) if your home is primarily used for

residential purposes and the church or other place of worship has permanent office and/or meeting facilities in another location. If your home is the primary meeting or office location for the church, the site would need to be improved to meet commercial development standards (parking, landscaping, handicap accessibility, etc.).

Citizen Notification

How are citizens notified of upcoming planning or zoning requests? Applications for zoning actions, subdivisions, and site plans are announced in a variety of ways. Mailed notices are typically sent to the property owner of record for properties adjacent and contiguous to the proposed project site, and to persons and organizations that have requested written notice. Projects requiring a public hearing are also noticed through newspaper legal advertisements. The county also posts signs announcing proposed development requests near proposed project sites. These signs include a three-digit code (the last three digits of the proposed case number) and the phone number of the Planning Department's teleworks information system (751-4700). This system provides 24-hour automated basic information about the proposed application. [Click here](#) for additional project information for upcoming public hearings.

Code Enforcement

How do I file a zoning complaint? You may report zoning violations by calling 748-1500 during normal business hours, or by using our [Web-based complaint system](#). An inspector will visit the site within five business days. When a violation is observed we will work with the property owner to resolve it. Chesterfield County policy is to not reveal the identity of zoning enforcement complainants. Information you provide is confidential, excluded from the Freedom of Information Act, and will not be revealed to others. Violations in public roads should be referred to the [Police Department](#).

Complaints

How do I file a zoning complaint? You may report zoning violations by calling 748-1500 during normal business hours, or by using our [Web-based complaint system](#). An inspector will visit the site within five business days. When a violation is observed we will work with the property owner to resolve it. Chesterfield County policy is to not reveal the identity of zoning enforcement complainants. Information you provide is confidential, excluded from the Freedom of Information Act, and will not be revealed to others. Violations in public roads should be referred to the [Police Department](#).

Comprehensive Plan

What is the Comprehensive Plan? The [Comprehensive Plan](#) is adopted by the [Board of Supervisors](#) to guide future growth and development. The Plan serves as the guide for evaluating future rezoning decisions.

When will the Comprehensive Plan be updated? Portions of the plan are nearly always under review or in the midst of an update process. Plan updates are scheduled based on a variety of factors, including age of the plan, changing development patterns, interest of the [Planning Commission](#) and [Board of Supervisors](#), and staff resources. [Click here](#) for current plan areas that are in the process of being updated.

How do I find my Plan area? [Click here](#) for an overview of the [Comprehensive Plan](#). Page 10 of this document shows the various Plan areas.

Conditional Use Permits

What is a conditional use permit? The conditional use permit process allows the County to consider certain types of land uses (conditional uses) that are not normally permitted in a zoning district. This process allows a case-by-case review certain land uses, to examine how the proposed use would affect nearby properties. This review provides the opportunity for the public to express support or concerns about the proposed land use through public hearings. The [Board of Supervisors](#) makes final determinations on whether to grant a conditional use permit.

What steps are necessary for getting a conditional use permit? Conditional use permit applications follow a standard public hearing process. This process typically requires four to six months, and includes the following basic steps:

- Informal review by planning staff. We will review the proposal in light of the [Comprehensive Plan](#), the [Zoning Ordinance](#), past approvals, and site-specific development and land use considerations. We inform potential applicants whether we will recommend approval, approval with certain conditions, or denial of the request.
- Pre-Application meeting with planning staff to review application.
- Formal submittal of application and [application fee](#).
- Staff analysis and report preparation, for [Planning Commission](#) review.
- [Planning Commission](#) public hearing. The [Planning Commission](#) forwards a recommendation on the case for final action by the [Board of Supervisors](#).
- [Board of Supervisors](#) public hearing, where a final determination is made to approve or deny the request.

Conditional Use Planned Development

What is a conditional use planned development? The conditional use planned development process allows the county to consider exceptions to “bulk” standards (such as required setbacks) and “use” standards (for consideration of land uses not permitted in a zoning district). This process is often used to promote high-quality, mixed- use developments with unique standards that are appropriate to a specific development. This review provides the opportunity for the public to express support or concerns about the proposed land use through public hearings. The [Board of Supervisors](#) makes final determinations on whether to grant conditional use planned developments.

What steps are necessary for conditional use planned development approval? Conditional use planned development applications follow a standard public hearing process. This process typically requires four to six months, and includes the following basic steps:

- Informal review by planning staff. We will review the proposal in light of the [Comprehensive Plan](#), the [Zoning Ordinance](#), past approvals, and site-specific development and land use considerations. We inform potential applicants

whether we will recommend approval, approval with certain conditions, or denial of the request.

- Pre-Application meeting with planning staff to review application.
- Formal submittal of application and [application fee](#).
- Staff analysis and report preparation, for [Planning Commission](#) review.
- [Planning Commission](#) public hearing. The [Planning Commission](#) forwards a recommendation on the case for final action by the [Board of Supervisors](#).
- [Board of Supervisors](#) public hearing, where a final determination is made to approve or deny the request.

I understand that conditional use planned developments can include “use exceptions” and “bulk exceptions.” What are these? Use exceptions are specified uses that are not permitted by right in a given zoning district. These use exceptions may be permitted through the approval a conditional use planned development. Bulk exceptions are requested variations from the development standards of the [Zoning Ordinance](#) (example: setback, parking and landscaping requirements).

Conditions of Zoning

What are conditions of zoning? Through the rezoning process, the [Board of Supervisors](#) may accept proffered conditions (voluntary offers by the applicant to develop a property subject to certain conditions) or require conditions to be placed on future development. These conditions are binding legal obligations that are often more restrictive than the normal zoning standards.

Several zoning cases apply to my property and they have conflicting conditions for development. How can I find out which rules apply? If two or more zoning cases have conflicting conditions, the most recently approved condition would apply.

How can I find what conditions of zoning apply to my property? This information is not yet available on our Web site. Please contact the [Planning Department](#).

Contact Information

How do I contact the Planning Department? [Click here](#).

Covenants

What are covenants or CC&Rs? Zoning standards are "minimum" standards that apply to all property. Certain subdivisions also have private covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) and/or property owner associations. These additional conditions are not enforced by the county, since they are private legal arrangements between property owners. These conditions are enforced by property owner associations, or by private property owners in a subdivision, or both. Often, covenants are more restrictive than county ordinances. However, in the case where covenants are less restrictive, county standards still apply as the minimum requirement. Some associations are mandatory, meaning that all residents must pay a membership fee. Others are voluntary, meaning that membership is optional. Associations are a primary means for enforcing property covenants. Covenants vary by subdivision, and are usually on record in the [Clerk of the Circuit Court](#). The [Planning Department](#) does not maintain records of private property covenants.

Crime Information

Where can I get information about crime rates in my neighborhood? The [Chesterfield County Communities Report](#) provides a variety of crime information at the community scale. The county is divided into 25 communities for the purpose of yearly study of various community trends. The report provides crime data for violent crimes, property crimes, and quality of life crimes. Additional crime information may be available through the [Police Department](#).

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Daycare

What are the rules for running a day care business out of a home? Daycare is a permitted use in residential and agricultural districts provided that the daycare operator takes care of no more than five children at one time (not including any children living on the premises). A conditional use permit is required for family day care homes that take care of more than five children that live elsewhere. For more information, [click here](#).

Decks

I want to build a deck at my house. What standards do I need to follow? Decks that are attached to principal structure and which are open (no walls) on three sides have special setbacks:

- Front yard – may extend not more than ten feet into the required setback
- Side yard – may extend not more than half of the required setback (and not closer than five feet from a side property line)
- Rear yard – may extend not more than ten feet into the required setback

Other factors such as building lines/envelopes shown on subdivision plats, floodplains, and Resource Protection Areas may limit these setback exceptions. Decks that are not attached to the principal structure are considered to be accessory structures and are subject to normal setback requirements for accessory structures.

Demographics

What is the population of Chesterfield County? [Click here](#).

How fast is the population of Chesterfield County increasing? [Click here](#).

Where can I find Census data for Chesterfield County? [Click here](#) to view summary information about 2000 Census data for Chesterfield County. More recent, limited census data may be available through the [American Communities Survey](#).

Development (Pending)

Is there somewhere on this website that I can gather information about pending development projects or do I need to speak with someone in the Planning Department? The development process is complex and requires multiple steps over long periods of time (such as rezoning, site plan, and/or subdivision) before construction begins. Developers often secure initial development approvals (such as rezoning) years before pursuing final development plans. The county usually does not know the specific timeframe of actual development, since this is a function of private property owner

Note: This information does not replace or supersede the Zoning Ordinance or conditions of zoning. Additional restrictions may be imposed by private covenants or conditions of property owner associations.

decisions. The [Planning Department](#) can tell you the where a project is in the development process.

- [Click here](#) for pending case information for development under review by the [Planning Commission](#), [Board of Zoning Appeals](#), and [Board of Supervisors](#).
- [Click here](#) for pending subdivision cases.
- [Click here](#) pending site plan cases.

Pending development cases under active review have public notification signs posted near the proposed development. Each sign has a three digit case code, such as "234." This represents the last three digits of the case number (in this example, the case number is 06SN0234. If you have a touch-tone telephone and want a general overview of the proposal, please call the Planning Department teleworks information system 24 hours a day at 751-4700. If the above-listed resources don't help, please contact our office. It helps us help if you have a specific case number or the location of the sign so we can find the correct case information for you.

Development Standards

What development standards apply to my property? Development standards include requirements for building setbacks, offstreet parking, signs, and other development related topics. There may be a variety of development standards that are unique to a specific property. These may include:

- [Zoning Ordinance](#) requirements for the zoning district
- [Zoning Ordinance](#) requirements contained in the Development Standards Manual ([Zoning Ordinance](#) Article 7)
- Conditions of zoning (from rezoning, conditional use permits, conditional use planned developments, variances, special exceptions, etc.)
- [Subdivision Ordinance](#) requirements
- Conditions from recorded subdivision plats

Please contact the [Planning Department](#) for information about specific development standards that apply to your property.

Development Standards Modifications

What is a development standards modification? A development standards modification, sometimes referred to as a "development standards waiver," is a process that may provide relief to [Zoning Ordinance](#) requirements. This process is available for development standards that are not subject to other relief procedures (such as variances, use permits, special exceptions, etc.).

What is the application process for a development standards modification? This process requires an application form, an [application fee](#), about two months processing time, and a hearing at the [Planning Commission](#). The applicant would need to demonstrate certain findings that are listed in [Zoning Ordinance](#) Section 19-19. [Our office](#) would gladly assist any person seeking to file such applications. Please note, however, that most applicants cannot demonstrate the required findings for this process.

Directions to the Planning Department

How do I get to the Planning Department? [Click here](#) for a map and directions to the [Planning Department](#) and the Public Meeting Room.

Dogs

How many dogs may I have? Keeping more than two dogs that are more than four months old for non-commercial use is defined as “private kennel.” Private kennels are permitted in the agricultural (A) district and prohibited in residential districts. A special exception is required for private kennels in residential districts. Dog licenses are available through [Animal Control](#). The [Zoning Ordinance](#) provides property owners the right to *apply* for special exceptions to allow private kennels in residential zoning districts. The public hearing process at the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) (BZA) is intended to provide a case-by-case review of such requests with input by affected residents in the area. The BZA may approve or deny such requests.

Driveways

Can I put my residential driveway right up against my neighbor’s property line? Provided that the driveway is flush with the ground, a driveway may come up to the property line. No setbacks are required. You may consider providing separation between your driveway and an adjacent property line for proper drainage and so that you may be able to maintain your driveway without encroaching onto neighboring property.

How big does my driveway need to be? The [Planning Department](#) does not regulate the size of a driveway. Please contact the [Transportation Department](#) or your [local VDOT office](#) for additional regulations.

Can I park my RV, boat, or trailer in my driveway? A recreational vehicle may only be parked in the rear yard of the property, set back at least five feet from the side property line and ten feet from the rear property line. Recreational vehicle parking in front or side yard driveways is not allowed, except for loading and unloading purposes. No more than two recreational vehicles may be parked on a residential driveway at a time.

Dwelling Units Allowed

How many houses can I have on my property? In most residential and agricultural zoning districts, the [Zoning Ordinance](#) permits only one dwelling unit per lot or parcel. The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines a dwelling unit as “any building or portion thereof providing complete independent permanent facilities for living, sleeping, eating and sanitation designed for or used exclusively as living quarters by one family.” If the structure has only one kitchen, it will be considered to be a single dwelling unit. A cooking area will be considered to be a separate kitchen if it contains a sink and at least one major appliance such as a stove or refrigerator).

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Easements

What is an easement? An easement is the legal right of someone else to use all or part of your property. Easements are typically granted for ingress and egress (traveling into and out of your property), utilities (water, sewer, electricity, etc.), and drainage.

How can I find out what easements are on my property? Easements are usually on record with the [Clerk of the Circuit Court](#). Many easements are shown on recorded subdivision plats. The [Planning Department](#) has plat information for most properties that located in recorded subdivisions. Properties located outside of recorded subdivisions typically do not have plats available in electronic format. The Real Estate Assessments Department [Web site](#) has a simple fill-in screen that you can use to find plats for many recorded subdivisions.

What can I do or build in an easement? Typically, you cannot interfere with or obstruct easement areas without the written permission of the easement owner.

Who enforces easement rights? Easements are a private civil matter between the property owner and the person/party who has the right of easement. The county is only involved in easements that are on county property or which give the county an easement right (water, sewer, storm water drainage, etc.).

Enforcement

How do I file a zoning complaint? You may report zoning violations by calling 748-1500 during normal business hours, or by using our [Web-based complaint system](#). An inspector will visit the site within five business days. When a violation is observed we will work with the property owner to resolve it. County policy is to not reveal the identity of zoning enforcement complainants. Information you provide is confidential, excluded from the Freedom of Information Act, and will not be revealed to others.

- F -

Family Splits / Family Subdivisions

What is a "family split subdivision" and is my property eligible for this process? Some properties are eligible for the "family subdivision" process. Regulations for family subdivisions are found in [Subdivision Ordinance](#) Section 17-2, under the definition of "subdivision, residential parcel." The property would need to be divided by a [residential parcel subdivision](#) (performed by a land surveyor) and each parcel created would need to meet the following minimum standards:

- Lot Area: one acre (43,560 square feet)
- Lot Width: 150 feet (measured at the front building setback line)
- Road Frontage on State Maintained Road: 15 feet
- Property cannot be divided for a family subdivision until it has been owned by the subdivider for at least two years
- The new parcel must be granted to an immediate family member, who in turn cannot sell the new parcel for at least five years.
- If the property will be served by a septic system, separate review and approval by the [Health Department](#) would be necessary.

If the property does not enjoy direct road frontage, a [variance to road frontage](#) would be required before the property is divided. This requires an application form (contact the [Planning Department](#)), [application fee](#) and about two months processing time. The [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) makes the final decision on variance applications through a [public hearing process](#).

Farms / Farming

I want to farm on my property. What standards apply? Farming is a permitted use by right in an agricultural district. A farm is defined as: *"Any tract of land which is used for raising agricultural products and which may include facilities for the sale of such products from the premises where produced. The definition of "farm" shall not include stock farms, commercial plant nurseries, commercial greenhouses, commercial hatcheries or other commercial retail or agriculture-related industrial use."*

Can I keep farm animals on my property? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) regulates the types of permitted land uses in various zoning districts. In residential districts, household pets such as dogs, cats, parakeets, tropical fish, etc. are permitted. In residential districts and in the agricultural district on properties smaller than three acres, keeping the following animals is not permitted and would require conditional use permit approval:

- Chickens
- Cows
- Farm Animals
- Fowl (other than chickens)
- Goats (including pygmy goats)
- Horses (including ponies and miniature horses)
- Pigs (including pot-bellied pigs)
- Rabbits
- Sheep
- Small Domesticated Livestock

The above listed animals are permitted in agricultural districts for property that is at least three acres in size.

Fees

How can I find out about application fees and/or fees for Planning Department services? [Click here](#).

Fences

What are the requirements for fences? All requirements for fences should be verified using the [Zoning Ordinance](#). You may need to check zoning conditions that may apply to your property. Contact the [Planning Department](#) for assistance.

- *Residential:* [Click here](#) for a brochure illustrating residential fence requirements. Fences may be up to seven (7) feet in height in side and rear yards, and up to four (4) feet in height in front and corner side yards. On corner lots no fence shall exceed a height of two (2) feet six (6) inches within twenty (20) feet in either direction of the corner lot. You may need to check restrictive covenants of your neighborhood, which are not enforced by Chesterfield County, for standards such as the style and design of fences. Covenants and lot surveys can be obtained from the [Circuit Court Record Room](#) or your community association office. There are no other architectural standards for fences in the [Zoning Ordinance](#). Fences that are placed on your property without your permission are a civil matter not enforced by the county.

- *Commercial & industrial:* Screening for dumpsters, mechanical equipment, outside storage areas, and truck dock or loading areas are typically required to be designed and constructed of materials similar in color and finish to the building(s) on site. Fences, if allowed, should be designed with alternating boards that provides for two quality material faces. If a solid board fence is used the flat, quality face shall face the adjacent property and the visual structure side shall face toward the project site.
- *General:* Security fences are required around swimming pools and shall be at least four (4) feet in height. Barrier permits are required for security fences around swimming pools. Building permits are typically not required for fences or walls. Please contact [Building Inspections](#) for more details. Prior to digging fence post holes or installing an “invisible fence,” please call "Miss Utilities" at 1-800-552-7001, so they can mark the location of underground utility lines. Finally be sure to check for easement and property line locations on your survey prior to contacting the [Planning Department](#) for assistance. Please note that if an easement runs along your property line, you would need to check with the easement owner to see if they will allow you to build within the easement. Most properties have a utility easement running along their rear property lines. Contact the [Utilities Department](#) to discuss encroachment into utility easements.

Final Check Subdivision Plats

What is a final check subdivision plat? A final check subdivision plat is the middle step in the subdivision process, occurring after a tentative subdivision plat is approved, and prior to approval and recordation of a record plat. Planning staff administratively reviews final check plats. An [application form](#) and [application fee](#) are required.

Floodplains / Flood Zones

How can I find out if my property is located in a floodplain or a flood zone? Floodplain and flood zone information is available through the [Environmental Engineering Department](#).

Can I build a structure such as a shed or fence in a flood zone? Typically no structure or fence is permitted to encroach into a designated flood zone. Confirm your particular situation with the [Environmental Engineering Department](#).

- G -

Garages

Does the county require a garage for a house, or can I just park my vehicles in the driveway? Garages are generally not required in residential districts, unless specified by a condition of zoning approval. Up to five vehicles may be parked in a residential district. A recreational vehicle may be parked in a driveway provided that it is parked in the rear yard of the property and setback at least five feet from the side property line and ten feet from the rear property line (except for loading and unloading of the recreation vehicle). No more than two recreational vehicles may be parked outside of an enclosed structure on any residential and agricultural property at a time.

I want to build a garage that is detached from my house. What rules apply? Setbacks for an accessory structure apply to detached garages. Based on zoning district, certain [setbacks](#) are required from the front, side and rear property lines.

Group Homes

What are the rules for group homes in residential neighborhoods? Group homes are permitted in residential districts if they can meet the [Zoning Ordinance](#) definition of a group home: “An adult and/or child caring facility licensed by the [State Department Of Mental Health, Mental Retardation And Substance Abuse Services](#), designed to provide resident services to individuals who are physically handicapped, mentally ill, mentally retarded, or developmentally disabled, in which no more than eight such individuals reside with one or more resident counselors or other staff persons. For the purposes of this section, mental illness and developmental disability shall not include illegal use of or addiction to a controlled substance as defined in Code of Virginia, § 54.1-3401. For the purposes of this chapter, a group home shall be considered a single-family dwelling.” Approval of a conditional use permit is generally required if the proposed group home does not meet the above definition.

Growth

How does the County plan for growth? The county has a [Comprehensive Plan](#) for long-term growth and development. This plan includes smaller area plans for different parts of the county, and countywide plans for topics such as [public facilities](#) and [roads](#). [Click here](#) for an overview and introduction to the [Comprehensive Plan](#).

What is the plan for growth in my area? The [Comprehensive Plan](#) is divided into smaller plans for different parts of the county.

How fast is the population of Chesterfield County increasing? [Click here](#) for population estimates. [Click here](#) for population projections.

How fast is my part of the county growing? The [Chesterfield County Communities Report](#) provides yearly estimates of growth in each of the 25 communities.

- H -

Height Limits

What are the building height limits for my property? In general, the following standards apply:

Residential zoning districts

- Forty feet or three stories, whichever is less (30 feet/2.5 stories, whichever is less, in parts of the Midlothian and Chester Village districts)
- Accessory buildings – ½ the height of the principal building or 25 feet, whichever is less
- Multifamily buildings – 70 feet or six stories, whichever is less

Agricultural zoning district

- Forty feet or three stories, whichever is less
- Farm accessory buildings – 50 feet

Note: This information does not replace or supersede the Zoning Ordinance or conditions of zoning. Additional restrictions may be imposed by private covenants or conditions of property owner associations.

- Accessory buildings – ½ height of principal building or 25 feet, whichever is less

Office, Business, or Industrial Districts

Heights for buildings and structures in office, business and industrial districts are subject to a variety of restrictions, listed in Section 19-598 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#).

Historical Preservation

Is my property historical? The decision to designate a property as historical is based upon many different factors. Through a public hearing process conducted the Historic Preservation Committee, the [Planning Commission](#) and finally through the [Board of Supervisors](#), a determination can be made on whether a property is historical. [Click here](#) for further information.

My property is a registered historical landmark. What rules apply to renovating or expanding the building? The property owner must submit an application to the [Planning Department](#) before exterior changes take place. The application is reviewed for adherence to [The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#). Once the proposed plans have been approved by the Preservation Committee, then a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued and the work may proceed (subject to applicable building permit requirements). [Click here](#) for more information on the process and the limitations of what is and what is not reviewed for renovating or expanding the building.

I want to list my property on the historical register. What are the steps? First, application for landmark status must be received by the [Planning Department](#). Then, the [Planning Commission](#) and the Preservation Committee meet jointly in a public hearing to review the application. The public hearing provides interested parties a chance to voice their opinion regarding landmark status. The property owner is encouraged to comment on the proposal at the public hearing. After the [Board of Supervisors](#) reviews independent reports from the [Planning Commission](#) and the Preservation Committee, a final public hearing is held and a majority vote of the [Board of Supervisors](#) is required to enact landmark designation.

Home-Based Businesses (Home Occupations)

Can I run a business out of my home? Home-based businesses are permitted subject to certain restrictions in agricultural and residential zoning districts. Restrictions apply to who can work on the premises, parking, signage, type of business, and onsite clients ([Zoning Ordinance](#) Section 19-65).

What rules apply to home-based businesses? For specific restrictions, [click here](#).

Horses

Can I have horses on my property? Horses are permitted in the agricultural zoning district on properties that are at least three acres. If the property is located in a residential zoning district, or is zoned agricultural and is less than three acres, approval of a conditional use permit would be required before horses would be allowed.

Household Pets

What types of animals are allowed at my house? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) regulates permitted land uses in various zoning districts. In residential districts, household pets such as dogs and cats are permitted as “accessory uses.” Keeping more than two dogs over four months of age per property is permitted in the agricultural (A) district, and is prohibited in any residential zoning district. A special exception is required for three or more adult dogs in residential districts. Dog licenses are available through [Animal Control](#).

What types of animals are not allowed? In residential zoning districts, and in the agricultural district on properties smaller than three acres, keeping the following animals is not permitted and would require approval of a conditional use permit:

- Chickens
- Cows
- Farm Animals
- Fowl (other than chickens)
- Goats (including pygmy goats)
- Horses (including ponies and miniature horses)
- Pigs (including pot-bellied pigs)
- Rabbits
- Sheep
- Small Domesticated Livestock

The above-listed animals are permitted in agricultural districts for property at least three acres in size.

I want to keep an “exotic” animal. What are the rules? Approval of a conditional use permit would be required in agricultural or residential districts to keep animals that have the same general character as farm animals or small domesticated livestock, but do not meet the [Zoning Ordinance](#) definition of “stock farm” or “residential stock farm.” Keeping of other animals that do not fit the above categories requires approval of a conditional use planned development for a use exception.

- I -

In-Law Units

Can I have an “in-law” unit in my house so a relative can live with me? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) permits one single-family dwelling unit per residential property. The definition of a dwelling unit allows separate areas for living, sleeping, cooking, and bathrooms. This means that if a house has more than one kitchen, it is no longer a single-family dwelling and is therefore not permitted by zoning. If more than one kitchen is proposed, a conditional use permit would be required for the second dwelling unit (even if it is occupied by a family member). A cooking area will be considered to be a separate kitchen if it contains a sink and at least one major appliance such as a stove or refrigerator). No special permit is required for a relative to live in your house, so long as the house has one kitchen. [Click here](#) for detailed information.

- J -

Junk

My neighbor has a bunch of junk in his front yard. How do I file a complaint? You may report zoning violations by calling 748-1500 during normal business hours, or by using our [Web-based complaint system](#). An inspector will visit the site within five business days. When a violation is observed we will work with the property owner to resolve it. Chesterfield County policy is to not reveal the identity of zoning enforcement complainants. The information you provide is confidential, excluded from the Freedom of Information Act, and will not be revealed to others. Violations in public roads should be referred to the [Police Department](#).

- K -

Kennels

Do I need a kennel license? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines “private kennels” as “a place where three or more dogs, more than four months old, are kept for private use.” Private kennels are permitted in the agricultural district and prohibited in residential districts. Approval of a special exception is required for to have a private kennel in a residential district. The [Zoning Ordinance](#) allows the right to *apply* for special exceptions for private kennels in residential districts. The public hearing process at the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) (BZA) is intended to provide a case-by-case review of such requests with input by affected residents in the area. The BZA may approve or deny such requests. Dog licenses are available through [Animal Control](#).

- L -

Landscaping Requirements

Does the county require any specific type of landscaping? Not for single-family residential projects, unless specific landscaping requirements are included as a condition of zoning or as part of a buffer area. Landscaping standards for office, commercial, and industrial land uses are contained in the [Zoning Ordinance](#), and vary by district and type of development. Contact the [Planning Department](#) for standards that apply to a specific property.

Land Use Plan

What is a land use plan? A land use plan is a long-range guide for growth and development that recommends future locations for a wide range of land uses (such as residential, office, commercial, industrial, etc.).

How does a land use plan affect development? The plan recommends various land uses in different locations. When property owners seek to develop their property, such development would need to be consistent with zoning requirements. The plan provides guidance and recommendations for rezoning prior to development.

- M -

Manufactured Homes

What is a manufactured home? A manufactured home is a structure designed to be moved to a site for single-family use. Manufactured homes are designed for use with or without permanent foundations. The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines manufactured homes in

Section 19-301. The term “manufactured home” and “mobile home” are often used interchangeably.

Where are manufactured homes permitted in the county? Permanent manufactured homes are permitted in the A zoning district. Temporary manufactured homes may be permitted, for an approval period of up to seven years, as follows: 1) by special exception in the A zoning district; and 2) by manufactured home permit in the R-7 zoning district, subject to approval by the [Board of Supervisors](#).

I have a vacant lot – can I put a manufactured home on it? The manufactured home may be permitted if it is allowed in the zoning district where the property is located, and the lot is buildable.

Maps

Where can I get a zoning map? At this time, the county does not have online zoning maps. You may view paper or GIS zoning maps at our offices during normal business hours, or you may purchase paper copies of the zoning map at the [Environmental Engineering Department](#) (748-1035).

Where can I get Comprehensive Plan maps? [Click here](#) for [Comprehensive Plan](#) maps. Small (8.5” x 11”) paper copies are available at the [Planning Department](#) front counter. Large format paper map may be special ordered through the Planning Department. Such orders require advance notice and duplication fees based on the project requirements.

Minor Site Plan Review

What is minor site plan review? Minor site plan review is a quicker review process for minor office, commercial, and industrial development projects. If the project involves land disturbance or a building addition of 2,500 to 10,000 square feet, it may be eligible for minor site plan review. [Click here](#) for detailed information. There is no fee for this process. Minor site plan review typically requires one-week review, with a one-hour staff/developer meeting held on Wednesdays. If revisions are required, an additional hour on a subsequent Wednesday will be necessary.

What is needed to apply for minor site plan review approval? You will need to provide completed [minor site plan application](#).

Mobile Homes

What is a mobile home? A mobile home is a structure designed to be moved to a site for single-family use. Mobile homes are constructed on a chassis for towing, and are designed for use with or without permanent foundations. The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines mobile homes in Section 19-301. The terms “mobile home” and “manufactured home” are often used interchangeably.

Where are mobile homes permitted in the county? Mobile homes may be permitted in the MH-1 and MH-2 zoning districts. Temporary mobile homes may be permitted, for an approval period of up to seven years by special exception in the A zoning district.

I have a vacant lot – can I put a mobile home on it? The mobile home may be permitted if it is allowed in the zoning district where the property is located, and the lot is buildable.

Modular Homes

What is a modular home? A modular home is different than a mobile home or a manufactured home. It is a structure that is built off-site, transported to a building site, and permanently installed (that is, not intended for removal and relocation at a later time). The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines modular homes in Section 19-301.

Where are modular homes permitted in the county? Modular homes may be permitted by ordinance at any location where a single-family dwelling may be constructed. However, conditions of zoning, private covenants, and/or homeowners association restrictions may govern the installation of modular homes in certain areas.

- N -

Nonconforming Uses

What is a nonconforming use? A nonconforming use is a land use which was legally established in the past, but is no longer allowed under current zoning standards.

What rules apply to nonconforming uses? Rules governing nonconforming uses are listed in [Zoning Ordinance](#) Section 19-3. However, recent state law changes apply to nonconforming uses and this section of the ordinance may require revision. If you have a specific nonconforming use question, please contact the [Planning Department](#).

- O -

Outside Storage

What restrictions apply to outside storage? Restrictions for outside storage depend on the zoning district and the type of storage in question. Outside storage cannot be located in required buffer areas. The [Zoning Ordinance](#) provides the following minimum restrictions:

- **Residential Zoning Districts:** There are special restrictions for storage related to home-based businesses, recreational vehicles, and business vehicles. Outside storage for residential uses is permitted so long as the storage is customarily accessory (incidental and subordinate) to a dwelling on the property. Examples could include small firewood piles for private noncommercial use, lawn furniture, and residential trash cans.
- **Office Zoning Districts:** Outside storage is not permitted.
- **Commercial Zoning Districts:** Outside storage is not permitted in C-1 and C-3 districts, and is restricted with special conditions in the C-3, C-4, and C-5 districts.
- **Industrial Zoning Districts:** Outside storage is not permitted in the I-1 district, and is permitted in the I-2 and I-3 districts.

Additional restrictions may apply as conditions of zoning.

Parcel Number

What is the parcel number for my property? The Real Estate Assessments Department [Web site](#) has a simple fill-in screen that you can use to find tax map/parcel numbers.

Parcel Plat Subdivisions

What are the requirements for a parcel plat subdivision? A [completed application](#) and [application fee](#) are required.

Parking Restrictions

What restrictions apply to parking school buses in residential areas? There is no parking restriction for school bus parking on residential property. If the school bus is parked on a residential street, this may result in a traffic safety issue and may be reported to the [Police Department](#).

What restrictions apply to truck parking in residential areas? Trucks parked on residential property (not in the public right-of-way) may not exceed 10,000 pounds or have more than two axles. Also, tow trucks may not be parked or stored on residential property. If there is a violation of this requirement, you may file a complaint with our code compliance staff, at 748-1500 during normal business hours, or by using our [Web-based complaint system](#). If on-street truck parking creates a traffic safety hazard, this should be reported to the [Police Department](#).

Permitted Land Uses

What types of land uses are permitted on my property? Permitted land uses vary by the zoning district. Conditions of zoning (conditional uses, special exceptions) may also allow or restrict certain permitted uses in the county. Contact the [Planning Department](#) to verify permitted uses for a specific property.

Planning

How does the county plan for the future? The [Comprehensive Plan](#) is adopted by the [Board of Supervisors](#) to guide future growth and development. The Plan serves as the guide for evaluating future rezoning decisions. [Click here](#) for a description of the planning process in Chesterfield County. Portions of the plan are nearly always under review or in the midst of an update process. Plan updates are scheduled based on a variety of factors, including age of the plan, changing development patterns, interest of the [Planning Commission](#) and [Board of Supervisors](#), and staff resources. [Click here](#) for current plan areas that are in the process of being updated.

How do I find my Plan area? [Click here](#) for an overview of the [Comprehensive Plan](#). Page 10 of this document shows the various Plan areas.

Planning Commission

What is the Planning Commission and what do they do? [Click here](#) for general information about the [Planning Commission](#).

Who is my Planning Commissioner? The county is divided into five magisterial districts (Bermuda, Clover Hill, Dale, Matoaca, and Midlothian), each with its own elected

representative to the [Board of Supervisors](#). The Board Member for each district appoints a Planning Commissioner to represent the district. To find your magisterial district, you can go to the [Department of Real Estate Assessments web site](#), which has a simple fill-in screen that you can use that will show your magisterial district.

How can I contact my Planning Commissioner? [Click here](#) for contact information for your Planning Commissioner.

Plats

How do I get a plat of my property? The [Planning Department](#) has subdivision plat information for most properties that located in recorded subdivisions. Properties located outside of recorded subdivisions typically do not have plats available in electronic format. This information may be on file in the office of the [Circuit Court Clerk](#). The Department of Real Estate Assessments [web site](#) has a simple fill-in screen that you can use to find plats for many recorded subdivisions.

Population

What is the population of Chesterfield County? [Click here](#) for current population estimates.

How fast is the population of Chesterfield County increasing? [Click here](#) for population estimates. [Click here](#) for population projections.

Proffers

What are proffers? A “proffer” is a voluntary offer by a developer to abide by certain development conditions. The best-known type of proffer is a “cash proffer.” Cash proffers are funds offered by developers at the time of rezoning to help defray capital facilities costs associated with the development.

The [Board of Supervisors](#) has an established goal of “Growth to Pay for Growth.” Therefore, new residents and businesses pay their share of the expansion of the county water and sewer systems through connection fees. However, for roads, schools and other public facilities, it is not so simple. A system similar to utility-connection fees, called impact fees, is not legal in Virginia for these other facilities. Instead, a system of cash-proffer payments promised at the time of rezoning was enacted in 1989 by the state for Chesterfield County and other jurisdictions. Cash proffers are helping finance roads and infrastructure. Currently, less than half of residentially zoned, undeveloped property is required to pay a cash proffer. Over time, this percentage will increase as earlier-zoned properties, not subject to cash proffers, are developed. Required cash proffers are payable upon submittal of a building permit application. [Click here](#) to view the county’s adopted cash proffer policy.

Are there proffers on my property? If the property was zoned prior to 1989, there should be no cash proffer. Properties zoned 1989 and afterwards may be subject to cash proffers, based on approved conditions of zoning. You can verify if cash proffers are required by contacting the [Planning Department](#). If cash proffers are required, the current amount may be verified by the [Budget and Management Department](#).

Property Lines

Where are my property lines located? Property lines are the recorded boundaries of your property. These lines may be recorded in official county records in the form of a recorded subdivision plat or (in the case of older properties or properties not located in subdivisions) by written deed description. Chesterfield County does not locate or mark private property lines. However, many properties have iron rods set at property corners, several inches below the surface of the soil. Often, the property owner may locate these rods by using a metal detector. If this is not possible, you may need the services of a professional land surveyor.

Property Values

How much is my property assessment? The Real Estate Assessments Department [Web site](#) has a simple fill-in screen that you can use to find tax map/parcel numbers for property. [Click here](#) for general information regarding assessments.

How will a proposed development affect my property values? The county does not provide real estate advice and cannot predict the potential impacts of any development proposal on nearby property values. You may wish to discuss this question with a real estate professional.

Publications

The [Planning Department](#) creates and distributes a variety of reports and publications. These reports are available without charge in electronic format on our Web site. Popular reports and publications include:

- [Chesterfield Communitites Report](#)
- [Chesterfield County Business Report](#)
- [Chesterfield County Demographic and Economic Profile](#)
- [Chesterfield Industrial Analysis](#)
- [The Plan For Chesterfield \(Comprehensive Plan\)](#)
- [Residential Development Report](#)
- [Subdivision Ordinance](#)
- [Zoning Ordinance](#)

Paper copies of most reports and publications are available by special order, for the cost of reproduction. Please contact the [Planning Department](#) for product availability.

Public Facilities Plan

What is the Public Facilities Plan? The [Public Facilities Plan](#) is the part of the county's [Comprehensive Plan](#) that plans for future county public facilities to serve existing and future development. Public facilities covered by this plan include county facilities such as fire stations, libraries, parks, police stations, and schools.

Public Hearings

What is the public hearing process? Public hearings are required for zoning actions, [Comprehensive Plan](#) amendments, ordinance amendments, appeals, and certain other development proposals. Pending development cases under active review have public notification signs posted near the proposed development. Each sign has a three digit

case code, such as "234." This represents the last three digits of the case number (in this example, the case number is 06SN0234. If you have a touch-tone telephone and want a general overview of the proposal, please call the Planning Department teleworks information system 24 hours a day at 751-4700. If these resources don't help, please contact our office. It helps us to help you if you have a specific case number or the location of the sign so we can locate correct case information.

How does the process work for mailed public hearing notices? The [Planning Department](#) mails public hearing notices in advance of public hearings to all owners of property located adjacent to the proposed project site, and to other persons and organizations that have requested written notice.

When will a certain development or zoning case be heard at a public hearing? [Click here](#) for recent and upcoming [Planning Commission](#) hearing agendas. [Click here](#) for recent and upcoming [Board of Supervisors](#) hearing agendas. [Click here](#) for recent and upcoming [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) hearing agendas.

- Q -

- R -

Real Estate Signs

What are the rules for posting signs for houses or property for sale? [Zoning Ordinance](#) standards for real estate signs can be found in [Zoning Ordinance](#) Section 19-640 ([click here](#)). In part, these standards include:

- No permit is required for most real estate signs.
- Real estate signs must be removed after the sale or rental of the property.
- Offsite real estate signs are limited to one per street intersection.
- Offsite real estate signs cannot include a company logo or realtor name, and are restricted to the following information: realtors association trademark "R", equal housing opportunity logo, "for sale" or "for rent" and an arrow.

Record Plats

What are record plats? A record plat is the final document for review in the [Planning Department](#)'s residential subdivision review process. The record plat and accompanying application document the final dimensions and boundaries of lots within a subdivision.

Where can I get an application for a record plat? Please [click here](#) for the record plat application. A recording fee will be required ([click here](#)).

Who does the recording of record plats? The [Clerk of the Circuit Court](#) completes the recording of record plats once they are approved by the [Planning Department](#).

Recreational Vehicles

Where can I store recreational vehicles? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines "recreational equipment" (Section 19-301) as: "equipment, including boats, boat trailers, rafts, house trailers, travel trailers, pick-up campers or coaches, motorized dwellings, tent trailers and the like, and cases or boxes used for transporting recreational equipment, whether

Note: This information does not replace or supersede the Zoning Ordinance or conditions of zoning. Additional restrictions may be imposed by private covenants or conditions of property owner associations.

occupied by such equipment or not.” The ordinance limits recreational equipment storage in residential districts. Recreational equipment may not be parked in front yards (except for loading or unloading), and must be parked or stored in a rear yard in an area that is set back at least ten feet from rear lot lines and five feet from side lot lines. Trailers cannot have wheels removed except for repair purposes. Recreational equipment cannot be used for living or business purposes or connected to utility services except for maintenance purposes. Relief from these requirements requires approval of a development standards modification.

Resource Protection Areas

What are resource protection areas? Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) are boundaries determined by the [Environmental Engineering Department](#) under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. The purpose of RPAs is to protect land areas adjacent to water bodies that contribute directly to water quality and health of the watershed.

I have a resource protection area on part of my property. What can I do with that part of my property? The [Environmental Engineering Department](#) must approve encroachment, clearing or construction within a RPA.

Restricted Uses

What are restricted uses? Restricted land uses vary by the type of zoning classification a property is zoned. A restricted land use is permitted on a property provided that each restriction can be met per the [Zoning Ordinance](#).

What happens if I want to do a certain restricted use and cannot meet the conditions that are listed by the Zoning Ordinance? If the restrictions cannot be met, a conditional use permit would be required.

Rezoning

How do I get my property rezoned? Several steps are involved in the rezoning process. Please [click here](#) for more information regarding the rezoning process.

Will my request get approved? Each rezoning case is looked at independently and is considered on a case-by-case basis. There are no guaranteed approvals for any rezoning case. Prior to making application for rezoning, [Planning Department](#) staff will meet with you to review your request and discuss the rezoning process.

How long does this process take? While each rezoning case is different, the average time needed to process rezoning cases is approximately six to eight months. Every case is unique so the time frame will vary accordingly. Some applications are delayed at the request of the applicant when additional time is necessary to address neighborhood concerns about the proposal.

How much does this process cost? The cost for rezoning property in the county depends on the rezoning desired for the property as well as the acreage of the property. Please [click here](#) for detailed fee information.

Does the county rezone property? The county has a formal process for rezoning property that includes public hearings at the [Planning Commission](#) and the [Board of Supervisors](#). Nearly always, property is considered for rezoning only after private property owners initiate this process. In rare and infrequent situations, the county may initiate the rezoning process.

- S -

Satellite Dishes

What rules apply to installing satellite dishes? Federal law allows installation of small satellite dishes (one meter – 39.37 inches – or smaller) in residential districts and dishes two meters (78.74 inches) or smaller in commercial districts. Dishes larger than one meter are not permitted in residential zoning districts. Satellite dishes between two meters and 12 feet in diameter are permitted subject to restrictions in office, commercial, and the I-1 zoning districts. Satellite dishes are permitted without special restrictions in I-2 and I-3 zoning districts, subject to setback requirements for accessory structures.

Setbacks

What is a setback? A setback is the legally required distance separation between structures and adjacent property lines, buffers and/or floodplain boundaries.

Why are setbacks required? Setbacks are a requirement of the [Zoning Ordinance](#), which is part of the [Code of Chesterfield County](#). The purpose of setbacks is to provide adequate yard areas and separation between buildings for light, air and privacy between properties. The term “yards” is used in the [Zoning Ordinance](#) to indicate required building “setbacks.”

What setbacks apply to my property? Setbacks depend on the zoning district, conditions of zoning, and subdivision restrictions that apply to the property. Please check with the [Planning Department](#) to confirm zoning as well as the setbacks for a particular property.

How are setbacks measured? Most setbacks are measured from property lines. Other forms of setbacks are taken from the actual boundary line (for example a 25’ setback from a floodplain boundary is taken from the actual floodplain boundary).

Schematic Plan

What is a schematic plan? A schematic plan depicts land uses and general road access for mixed use development projects.

When is a schematic plan required? A schematic plan may be a requirement of zoning conditions or for any project containing residential and nonresidential uses together. Prior to tentative or site plan approval, a schematic plan must be approved by the [Planning Commission](#).

What are the steps for getting a schematic plan approved? An application form (please contact the [Planning Department](#)) and an [application fee](#) are required. Public notice is sent to all adjacent landowners of the property under schematic plan review. The final step is a public hearing at the [Planning Commission](#).

Second Dwelling Units

Can I have a second dwelling unit in my house so a relative can live with me? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) permits one single-family dwelling unit per residential property. The definition of a dwelling unit allows separate areas for living, sleeping, cooking, and bathrooms. This means that if a house has more than one kitchen, it is no longer a single-family dwelling and is therefore not permitted by zoning. If more than one kitchen is proposed, a conditional use permit would be required for the second dwelling unit (even if it is occupied by a family member). A cooking area will be considered to be a separate kitchen if it contains a sink and at least one major appliance such as a stove or refrigerator). No special permit is required for a relative to live in your house, so long as the house has one kitchen. [Click here](#) for detailed information.

Sheds

Do I need a building permit to build or install a shed? A building permit is required for most new construction. Information about building permits is available from the [Building Inspections Department](#). Building permits are generally not required for small accessory structures (such as sheds less than 150 square feet, costing less than \$500 in materials and labor).

Where can I build a shed on my property? Detached shed structures must meet accessory structure [setbacks](#). Setbacks vary by zoning district so please consult the [Planning Department](#) to verify your zoning first.

Signs

Where do I get a sign permit? Sign permit applications are available [online](#) and at the [Building Inspections Department](#).

What sign restrictions apply to my property? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) governs various sign restrictions, based on the type of sign (such as freestanding, building mounted, banners, directional signs, etc.), where the sign is located, and what the type of use the sign is advertising. There may also be conditions of zoning that apply to the property in question. Finally, property owner associations and commercial center management may have additional sign restrictions. Please contact the [Planning Department](#) to discuss your particular situation.

Site Plans

Please explain the site plan review process and various requirements. [Click here](#) for a brochure that overviews the site plan review process. If you have additional questions, please contact the [Planning Department](#).

Where can I get a site plan review application form? [Click here](#).

Where can I read staff comments on site plan review applications? [Click here](#).

Special Exceptions

What is a special exception? A special exception is permission granted by the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) to allow certain types of land uses that are not normally permitted in a

zoning district. The [Zoning Ordinance](#) lists the types of special exceptions that are possible in each zoning districts.

How do I get approved for a special exception? A property owner must apply to [Board of Zoning Appeals](#). This process requires an application form (contact the [Planning Department](#)) and an [application fee](#). The [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) has the authority to approve, approve with conditions, or deny applications for special exceptions.

Staff Reports

How can I get a copy of a staff report for a planning or zoning case? [Click here](#) for meeting agendas and staff reports for upcoming [Board of Zoning Appeals](#), [Board of Supervisors](#), and [Planning Commission](#) meetings. Staff reports are typically available one week prior to the scheduled public hearing date. Staff reports for previously approved actions are available upon request from the [Planning Department](#).

Storage Buildings

Do I need a building permit to build or install a storage building? A building permit is required for most new construction. Information about building permits is available from the [Building Inspections Department](#). Building permits are generally not required for small accessory structures (such as tool sheds less than 150 square feet, costing less than \$500 in materials and labor).

Subdivision Ordinance

How can I get a copy of the subdivision ordinance? [Click here](#) for an electronic copy. Paper copies are available through the [Planning Department](#) for the cost of copying.

Subdivisions

My subdivision is incomplete and many improvements such as paving and landscaping are not finished. When will these be addressed? During the construction phase of any new subdivision, it is typical for some improvements to be partially installed during initial construction and finished during later construction phases. When a subdivision is under construction, there is an interim period when some improvements are completed, and others are "bonded" and will be installed later. This process allows development to proceed and provides a financial and legal guarantee that subdivision improvements will be completed per plan. This may include improvements such as landscaping, street pavement, utility pole relocation, streetlight installation, etc.

Substantial Accords

What is a substantial accord? A substantial accord is a finding by the [Board of Supervisors](#) that a proposed capital facility (school, library, fire station, etc.) is "substantially in accord" with the adopted [Comprehensive Plan](#). [Click here](#) to view the county's substantial accord policy.

Survey Plat

Where can I get a copy of my property's survey plat? A copy of your survey plat may be obtained through the Records Room at the [Clerk of the Circuit Court](#).

Will the county survey my property? Chesterfield County does not survey private property. You would need to consult a private surveyor/engineer to perform this service.

Swimming Pools

Where can I put a new swimming pool on my property? A pool is a permitted accessory structure in residential and agricultural districts. The pool must lie in the side or rear yard of the property. A pool cannot be placed in the front or corner side yard, and must be setback at least six feet from side and rear property lines.

What the fence requirements for swimming pools? Fence requirements for swimming pools are handled through the [Building Inspections Department](#).

- T -

Tax Map Number

What is my tax map number? The term “tax map number” refers to the old system of property identification which has been replaced by “tax ID numbers” (also called “parcel ID numbers”). The tax ID number is 15 digits, and refers to a geographic reference system that enables computerized mapping of county properties. You can look up your property’s tax ID number through the [Real Estate Assessments Department](#). Enter your property address to access the database.

Tentative Subdivision Plats

What is a tentative subdivision plat? A tentative subdivision plat is the first of three separate stages required to divide land for sale of individual lots. This process is intended to review overall site improvements and infrastructure for compliance with county codes.

Where can I get information about pending tentative subdivision plats? [Click here](#).

What is needed to apply for a tentative subdivision plat? An [application form](#) and an [application fee](#) are required.

Tool Sheds

Do I need a building permit to build or install a tool shed? A building permit is required for most new construction. Information about building permits is available from the [Building Inspections Department](#). Building permits are generally not required for small accessory structures (such as sheds less than 150 square feet, costing less than \$500 in materials and labor).

Trailers

Where can I park my trailer(s)? Trailers cannot be parked or stored in front of houses (except for loading and unloading). They may be parked in the rear yard of the property, so long as they are located at least five feet from side property lines and ten feet rear property lines. No more than two trailers may be parked outside on any residential or agricultural property.

Transportation

What is the county's plan for transportation? The [Thoroughfare Plan](#) is part of the [Comprehensive Plan](#). This plan identifies road network needs to serve future development.

- U -

Uses Permitted

What types of land uses are permitted on my property? Permitted land uses vary by zoning district and sometimes by conditions of zoning (such as conditional uses, special exceptions, etc.). The [Planning Department](#) can help you verify specifically what land uses are permitted on a property.

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Validation Plats

What is a validation plat? Over the years regulations have changed, pertaining to how property outside of a subdivision may be divided. Many properties created under “the old rules” do not meet current standards and may not have been legally created. The subdivision ordinance allows many of these older parcels to be “validated” (made acceptable for building purposes) through the validation plat process.

How do I apply for a validation plat? An [application form](#) and [application fee](#) are required.

Variances

What is a variance? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) defines a variance as: “a reasonable deviation from those provisions of this chapter regulating the size or area of a lot or parcel of land, or the size, area, bulk or location of a building or structure when the strict application of this chapter would result in unnecessary or unreasonable hardship to the property owner, and such need for a variance would not be shared generally by other properties, and provided such variance is not contrary to the intended spirit and purpose of this chapter and would result in substantial justice being done.” Variances apply to physical development standards such as building setbacks and building height.

How do I apply for a variance? Variances require strict legal findings, including a requirement that the variance is necessary due to a real hardship. Generally, this finding cannot be made if the applicant has a legitimate design alternative. There are two types of variances. One option is to have staff make an [administrative determination for a variance](#) for building setbacks. This process typically requires three weeks processing time. Another option is to have the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) make a determination for the variance request. An application form (contact the [Planning Department](#)) and an [application fee](#) will be required. This process typically requires two months processing time.

Vehicle Repair

I want to open a vehicle repair business. What are the county requirements? The property where you wish to operate the business would need to be properly zoned. Generally, such businesses are not permitted in residential, agricultural, or office zoning districts. You will also need a [business license](#) to operate the business.

I want to repair my car at my house. What county standards apply? Car repair of your personal vehicles is permitted by zoning at your residence, subject to certain limitations. The car repair activity cannot be a business ([home occupation](#)), and inoperable vehicles must be shielded or screened from view from adjacent properties. Private covenants or homeowners association requirements may also prohibit or restrict vehicle repair.

I have a car that doesn't run. Are there particular storage requirements for keeping this at my home? Only one inoperable vehicle may be stored outside of a fully enclosed building, provided it is shielded or screened from view.

- W -

Walls

All requirements for walls should be verified using the [Zoning Ordinance](#). You may need to check for zoning conditions that may apply to your proposed project. The files can be viewed in the [Planning Department](#) or you may contact our office for assistance.

Residential: Walls can be up to seven (7) feet in height in the side and rear yards, and up to four (4) feet in height in the front and corner side yards. On corner lots no wall shall be above a height of two (2) feet six (6) inches within twenty (20) feet in either direction of the corner lot. You may need to check the restrictive covenants of your neighborhood, which are not enforced by the county, for standards such as the style and design of walls. Covenants and lot surveys may be obtained from the [Circuit Court Record Room](#) or your community association office. There are no architectural standards for residential walls in the [Zoning Ordinance](#). Walls placed on your property without your permission are a civil matter and not enforced by the county. [Click here](#) for a brochure describing common fence regulations.

Commercial and industrial: Screening for dumpsters, mechanical equipment, outside storage areas, and truck dock or loading areas are typically required to be designed and constructed of materials similar in color and finish to the building(s) on site. Fences, if allowed, should be designed with alternating boards that provides for two quality material faces. If a solid board fence is used the flat, quality face shall face the adjacent property and the visual structure side shall face toward the project site.

General: Security fences are required around swimming pools and shall be at least four (4) feet in height. Barrier permits are required for security fences around swimming pools. Otherwise building permits are typically not required for fences or walls. Please contact [Building Inspections](#) for more details. Prior to digging fence post holes, please call "Miss Utilities" at 1-800-552-7001, so they can mark the location of underground utility lines. Finally be sure to check for easement and property line locations on your survey prior to contacting the [Planning Department](#) for assistance. Please note that if an easement runs along your property line, you would need to check with the easement

owner to see if they will allow you to build within the easement. Most properties have a utility easement running along their rear property lines. The [Utilities Department](#) should be contacted to discuss encroachment into utility easements.

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- Y -

Yard Sales

What are the county rules for yard sales? Yard sales are permitted with restrictions in residential and agricultural districts. A yard sale must: 1) be accessory to a principal use, 2) not exceed two days in duration, 3) be conducted by the owner or lessee of the property and includes only personal/household items 4) not occur on the same property more than four times in a calendar year and/or no more than two times in a thirty day period. No permit is required from the [Planning Department](#). Signs for yard sales are limited to four square feet in size. One sign may be posted offsite (so long as it is not posted on traffic control signs, utility poles, or in such a way that it obstructs the visibility of vehicles on the road) and one sign may be posted on the property. Yard sale signs may not be posted earlier than 48 hours prior to the sale. All yard sale signs must be removed within 48 hours after the sale.

- Z -

Zoning Amendments

How can I rezone my property? [Click here](#) for information regarding the rezoning process.

How can I change zoning ordinance requirements? Amendments to the actual text of the ordinance are initiated by either the [Planning Commission](#) or the [Board of Supervisors](#), and are subject to final review and approval by the [Board of Supervisors](#). Relief from specific zoning requirements may be possible, depending on the type of requirement. Please contact the [Planning Department](#) for application information.

Zoning Certificates

What are zoning certificates? A [zoning certificate](#) is an official letter issued by the [Planning Department](#) that discusses zoning issues that apply to a property.

How can I get a zoning certificate? [Click here](#). A letter of request and an application fee of \$75.00 will be required.

Zoning Districts

What are zoning districts? The county is divided into a variety of zoning districts, to encourage balanced development and compatible land uses. There are a variety of districts, including agricultural, residential, office, commercial, and industrial.

What is my zoning district? At this time, zoning maps are not available on our Web site. Please contact the [Planning Department](#) for this information.

Zoning Ordinance

What is the Zoning Ordinance? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) is Chapter 19 of the [Chesterfield County Code](#), and provides standards for the use and development of land in the county. The ordinance states: *“the purpose of this chapter is to promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the public and to accomplish the objectives of Code of Virginia, §§ 15.2-2200 and 15.2-2283.”*

What happens if someone violates the Zoning Ordinance? The [Zoning Ordinance](#) is an adopted law that can be enforced through monetary fines and citations requiring court appearance.

Zoning: Permitted Uses

What types of land uses are permitted on my property? Permitted land uses vary by zoning district. Other conditions of zoning (conditional uses, special exceptions) may also allow or restrict certain permitted uses. The [Planning Department](#) can verify specifically permitted uses for a property.

Zoning Violations

How do I file a complaint about a zoning violation? You may report zoning violations by calling 748-1500 during normal business hours, or by using our [Web-based complaint system](#). An inspector will visit the site within five business days. When a violation is observed we will work with the property owner to resolve the situation. The information you provide will be confidential. This information is excluded from the freedom of information act and does not have to be revealed. County policy is to not reveal the identity of complainants on zoning enforcement concerns. Violations in public roads should be referred to the [Police Department](#).